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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study examined the interactions of preservice teachers with their pupils to determine if differences in interaction were seen. Explorations of teacher thinking, particularly the social cognitive process of trait attribution and the role of cultural background experiences, were key areas of analysis. The literature reviews suggested that white preservice teachers with little background experience with diverse cultures would be more likely to interpret the behavior of pupils from diverse cultures according to their own cultural norms, making incorrect attributions of intent and motivation, while those with more experience would be more likely to suspend judgment to gather more information or take the pupils' cultural norms into consideration when interpreting or responding to pupil behaviors. Four white female preservice teachers were selected based on their extreme responses to a cultural background survey. Two preservice teachers had more background experiences with diverse cultures, while two had less cultural background experiences. Two lessons were videotaped for each preservice teacher during their solo teaching period. Then stimulated recall interviews were conducted with the teachers and several pupils for each videotape. Preservice teachers also kept daily journals in which they were asked to focus on pupil behaviors and management issues. Differences in preservice teachers' interactions were found that followed the pattern suggested by the literature. This paper is a case study of one of the participants, a preservice teacher with little cultural experience. Lack of knowledge of cultural norms was found to affect her interpretations of pupil behavior. (Contains 21 references.) (Author/SLD)

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Running Head: CULTURAL MISINTERPRETATIONS

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A Case Study of Cultural Misinterpretations of Behavior in One Preservice Teacher's Lesson

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Abstract

This exploratory study examined the interactions of preservice teachers with their pupils to determine if differences in interaction occurred for such pupils. Exploration in teacher thinking, particularly the social cognitive process of trait attribution, and the role of cultural background experiences were key areas of analysis. The literature reviewed suggested that White preservice teachers with little background experience with diverse cultures would be more likely to interpret the behavior of pupils from diverse cultures according to their own cultural norms, making incorrect attributions of intent and motivation, while those with more experience would be more likely to suspend judgment to gather more information or take the pupils' cultural norms into consideration when interpreting or responding to pupil behaviors. Four White, female preservice teachers were selected based on their extreme responses to a cultural background survey. Two preservice teachers had more background experiences with diverse cultures, while two had less cultural background experiences. Two lessons were videotaped for each preservice teacher during their solo teaching period. Then stimulated recall interviews were conducted with the teachers and several pupils for each videotape. Preservice teachers also kept daily journals in which they were asked to focus on pupil behaviors and management issues. Differences in preservice teachers' interactions were found that followed the pattern suggested by the literature. This paper is a case study of one of the participants, Barbara, a preservice teacher with little cultural experience. Lack of knowledge of cultural norms was found to affect her interpretations of pupil behavior.

Background

Culturally-diverse children do not fare well in school. Research suggests that a major factor is the mismatch between the culture of home and school (Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1987). The blame is often attributed to teacher racism and ethnocentrism. Little, however, is known about what actually occurs between teachers and culturally diverse pupils, or why. While suggestions for inner city practica and courses on multiculturalism abound to remedy preservice teachers' ignorance, inability, or disinclination to meet the needs of culturally diverse pupils, there is little research evidence proving their effectiveness (Grant & Secada, 1990).

There is a great deal of information in the field of social psychology on interpretations of behavior and social interaction, which has not been used to inform teaching and teacher education. Trait attributions are inferences about the behaviors of other that are often inferred spontaneously and unconsciously (Carlston & Skowronski, 1994; Lewicki, 1982; Smith, Stewart, & Buttram, 1992). If individuals have the goal of judging behavior, or the expectation of interacting with another (a regular occurrence in teaching), the likelihood of trait attribution increases. Most trait attributions are causal inferences which reflect dispositional attributions, inferring motivation or stable personality traits to an individual, and are inferred more often from visible behaviors (Newman & Uleman, 1989). They are used to formulate appropriate social responses.

The standards for judging such behaviors are derived from shared cultural models containing expectations and norms which are learned at an early age and are often known only implicitly (D'Andrade, 1990a; Quinn & Holland, 1987). Since these implicit norms are often unexamined, alternative interpretations of behaviors are rarely considered (D'Andrade, 1990b; Quinn & Holland, 1987). Since members of different cultural groups may exhibit the same visible behavior with entirely different motivations and interpretations, the possibility of misunderstandings between members of different cultures is likely (Argyle, 1982; Bochner, 1982). Most teachers are White, Anglo, and female. The teacher population has decreased in diversity (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992), at the same time that school populations have become increasingly diverse in race, language, and culture (Burstein & Cabello, 1989). This situation should increase the likelihood of incorrect inferences or misattributions of behavior in the classroom between White teachers and their culturally diverse pupils.

Studies in Hawaiian schools found Anglo teachers interpreting characteristic behavioral norms of Hawaiian culture exhibited by their pupils (such as overlapping speech and clowning) as rude interruptions (Au, 1980; Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1987). Erickson and Mohatt (1977) found differences in Native and Anglo teachers in style, time, and management, all related to cultural norms. Native pupils were more comfortable and participated more in lessons conducted by Native teachers where cultural norms and expectations were synchronous between pupil and teacher. Since, matching students and teachers by culture is problematic due to the shortage of minority teachers and the variety of cultural diversity in many school systems, some research (Bochner, 1982) suggests that the best response to this problem is to provide teachers with knowledge and training in the salient characteristics of the cultures involved, a preparation rarely available to preservice teachers in most teacher education programs.

African-American pupils also bring culturally diverse norms to school that can be misinterpreted by their mainstream White teachers. Such differences have gone unacknowledged, or if acknowledged, labeled as deficient. Their dialect has also never been recognized as an official language, although documented as such by linguists. Incorrect inferences about pupils' cultural behaviors due to trait attribution are hypothesized to influence teacher expectations, and lead to inequities in instruction, discipline, and placements. This study was an exploratory attempt to examine the cognitive process of trait attribution or misattribution in the classroom interactions of preservice teachers with pupils from diverse cultures, particularly African-American pupils.

Methodology

Participants

Four preservice elementary teachers participated in the study. All were White, Anglo, and female. They were chosen to represent contrasting responses in a purposeful sampling of extremes (Patton, 1990). Two of the teaching associates, Anne and Barbara (not their real names), had little experience with diverse cultures.

The other two, Yvonne and Zora (not their real names), had more experience with diverse cultures. Barbara's interactions are described in this paper.

Participants and cooperating teachers were told that the focus of the study was "beginning teachers' thoughts and responses to teacher-student interactions involved in managing the classroom," which was the broader topic of interest. All participants were debriefed afterwards and allowed to respond to their individual case studies.

Setting

A small city in a Mid-Atlantic state was chosen as the site for this study. The student population of the school system was composed of Caucasians (55%) and African-Americans (45%). The elementary schools chosen varied slightly in their racial composition. One school, Whittier, had approximately 30% African-American pupils, while Monroe had 45% African-American-pupils. A wide range of socioeconomic levels were represented in both school populations. The selected preservice teachers were paired to include one from each extreme grouping at each school. All were placed in third grade classrooms. Barbara, the focus of this case study, was placed at Monroe Elementary.

Data Collection

Two lessons were videotaped for each preservice teacher during the solo period (the last two weeks) of their first student teaching placement. This allowed student teachers to get to know their pupils, since trait attribution is a process believed to be used more regularly with familiar people. Trait attributions are also more likely when interaction is expected and when evaluation judgments are a goal (Newman & Uleman, 1989). It was most likely that teaching associates would have the goal of monitoring behavior and responses, and making appropriate attributions and responses, when the responsibility for the class was theirs.

Taped lessons occurred during two time periods: (a) as school began and continuing through the first lesson of the day; and (b) beginning with the last lesson of the day and continuing through to the end of the school day. These times allowed a representative "slice of reality" (Evertson & Green, 1986, p. 165) from the classroom which could provide a variety of activities and interactions in the classroom, including instruction, management, and routine behaviors. Teaching associates chose the date of the taping, as well as content and lesson type.

Stimulated-recall interviews were conducted with teaching associates and selected pupils to determine their interpretation of events, their thinking behind responses, and whether trait attribution and/or misattribution might be occurring. Journal entries supplemented interviews to provide greater depth into teaching associates' interpretations or attributions of pupils' characteristics or intent.

The recording system of this study was an open system (Evertson & Green, 1986) designed to capture, with the "widest lens" of videotaping, the on-going interaction between teacher and pupils within a particular time period. The focus of observation and analysis was interactions, defined as verbal and/or nonverbal communicative exchanges, between teaching associates and pupils. Such interactions could be simple exchanges of only a few words, or longer, more complex exchanges. The boundaries between interactions were determined by the natural context; ending when the communicative contact between teacher and pupil was broken and attention was refocused.

Data Analysis

While patterns and categories were suggested through continual reflection and analysis, conventional content coding was determined to be less useful in analyzing classroom interaction. A lesson is a unit, and the responses of the pupils and the teacher are integrally linked in a series of interactions that create an on-going history and context over time that are vital to understanding these interactions. For this reason, interactions with pupils were analyzed in minicases. Interactions for these pupils were pulled together from the videotape

transcripts. Comments from stimulated-recall interviews were placed with the transcript sections to which they pertained. Finally, journal comments about the students were added.

Pupils were initially chosen for deeper analysis because of their frequency of interaction with teachers, as well as their repeated mention in interviews and journal entries. These interactions were further analyzed to determine the number of times pupils raised their hand, were called on with and without a hand raised, called out answers, received directives and reprimands, challenged the teacher, received praise, approached the teacher, and were approached by the teacher. Interactions captured between pupils were also considered. A cross-case comparison was conducted across the pupil minicases to determine patterns for each participant.

Barbara's case is reported in this paper. The composition of her class was seven African-American pupils (1 female, 6 males), ten White pupils (4 females, 6 males), and one Asian female. The seating arrangement, a combined effort of Barbara and her cooperating teacher, was somewhat mixed in gender and race. However, there were a larger number of African-Americans (3) seated at the central table near the front of the room. The most of the tables had one African-American pupil. Five pupils were initially chosen for minicases from her class. Two more were done later. A brief minicase for four of the pupils follow. Besides being well-represented in classroom interactions, journals, and interview comments, this group represented the major ethnic diversity present in the class. All of them represented different management challenges for Barbara.

Interactions With Individual Pupils

Brett

Brett was a White, male pupil in Barbara's classroom. He was an attractive, blond Anglo with a tall, slim build. Brett was identified as a gifted student, and came from a high SES background. Barbara described his background in this comment:

> "He's so funny. He's more cultured than most adults I know. He's been to Europe, like every year. Yeah, and he speaks German fluently.

He was mentioned several times as one of a group of White males in the gifted program whom Barbara considered "troublemakers:"

> "...but several of the same children are constantly disruptive. ...it is interesting to see how they affect other group members. These kids really feed from one another."

> "...he [Brett] and David, and William are really terrors. When they get together...that's why they're at different tables---that was planned."

This group appeared to be very close, and Brett appeared to be the leader. He was the only pupil who openly challenged Barbara. In the first lesson, during morning check-in, David and Brett ignored Barbara's directive to break up their huddle in the back of the room and return to their seats. Other pupils were also aware of the connection between these boys and the nature of their activities as indicated by one girl's comment, "We have three troublemakers, no four troublemakers in our class, Harold, Brett, David, and William." This was in spite of the fact that the class contained several students who had some emotional or family problems that contributed to aggressive and disruptive behavior. But these were not the students who were considered troublemakers. Rather, it was these advantaged, White males who were so labeled.

In support of his characterization as a troublemaker, Brett was observed in both lessons aggravating students in ways that were multi-staged and prolonged, suggesting some forethought. Both the students aggravated were noted by Barbara as students who would fight back and, thus, create a disruption. Phillip, a Black male described in another case, was a student who would be expected to react. When Brett pushed into

him during lesson one after a series of moves to position himself directly in back of him, his response was immediate and loud as he moved forward rapidly, "Get off me!!" Brett's target in the second lesson was a White female at his table, Anne, whom Barbara characterized in the following comment, "Anne gives it right back to him (Brett), and he gives it to her. The funny part is she's extremely sensitive, also, and so she gets upset easily."

Barbara noted that she really liked this group, "I think they're funny, and I wish I could find a way to really reach them." At one point during the second lesson, when students were working at their desks, she approached Brett and ruffled his hair with her hand. However, she was frustrated by the boys' continual disruption of class, and was quick to reprimand or issue directives, especially to Brett, in order to maintain control. Barbara's conclusion as to the possible cause of Brett's misbehavior came from her interpretation that these gifted boys were bored with the instruction, "On the opposite end, we also have the gifted and overly bored bunch who are incessantly disruptive."

Barbara's interactions with Brett seemed aimed at keeping him on-task and, thus, to prevent him from disrupting class. She was very aware of his movements around the room, and was quick to direct him to stop talking or return to his seat. She did this even when other students were out of their seat or also talking. On videotape Black males were seen wandering the room in the morning before class began, moving back and forth from the coat room talking. No such directives were given to Black males who were talking. Her responses to talking and movement in the class were different for White males and Black males.

The White males in the class, particularly the three students she identified as problems, may have been aware of this inconsistency. The perception of tighter control might be what David suggested in an interview question about the huddle with Brett in the back of the room that morning:

> David: "I was telling him something about Saturday."
> Researcher: "What did you think Ms. B wanted you to do at that point?"
> David: "Get unpacked. I already got unpacked. Start coloring. But there was going to be no other time for like hours to talk."

Barbara's interactions with Brett revealed a conflicting pattern. While she appeared to like Brett, she was frustrated with his disruptive behavior, irritated at his open challenges, and disappointed at her inability to challenge him. Barbara's frustration and irritation were often more visible in classroom interaction, however, than her positive regard, creating an interaction pattern that, from Brett's point of view, might have appeared restrictive and unfair in the public arena of the classroom.

Phillip

Phillip was an imaginative and energetic Black male who was both delightfully charming and a little intimidating. While he was rather small in stature, he was a leader in the group of Black males in class. Phillip was a street-wise kid with a tough demeanor. He was aggressive, used strong Black dialect, and was very concerned with image and saving face. Phillip also appeared to be very bright, often evaluating social situations with great complexity. He was also very interested in writing and language. His tough demeanor came and went depending on the insecurity and tenseness of a situation, or his excitement over an activity. Barbara agreed with her cooperating teacher about Phillip's moods:

> "He is a volatile and potentially dangerous child if his emotions get out of control. She tries to watch his moods and interactions with other students to prevent blow-ups. She keeps him very busy, and she tries to focus him on things other than himself. ...I can always tell in the morning if he is going to be aggressive on a particular day."

Although Phillip was interviewed after both lessons, it was difficult to discern what was truthful with Phillip and what was a story designed to have a calculated effect on those around him. This was especially true when Phillip and Tim were interviewed together in the second interview. A large increase in posturing was evident. Throughout both interviews, Phillip repeatedly anticipated his actions on the videotape, saying "Watch this!," "See, look!," suggesting that he may have been playing for the camera. In one incident captured on the tape, that appeared to be one of those volatile occasions, the following conversation occurred with the researcher:

> Phillip: "I be slammin' my bookbag." (laughs loudly) "You saw that."
> Researcher: "What?"
> Phillip: "Oh, she lettin' me tally points. Listen, watch this, see."
> Researcher: "Why did you do that?"
> Phillip: "I was mad. They don't get me mad, I go off."
> Researcher: "Who were you mad at?"
> Phillip: "Stephen. See they don't supposed to because they know I got a bad temper. See how we fussing', we fussin', that's funny. Rewind it!"

Stephen's response to this incident is also enlightening:

> Stephen: "That's the part I like, getting Phillip mad, that's what I like."
> Researcher: "You like getting Phillip mad? What did you say to him?"
> Stephen: "I said you don't tell me what to do and then he picked up his bookbag ."
> Researcher: "What was he trying to tell you to do?"
> Stephen: "He was trying to say, 'No, you don't, you can't do it, he was trying to boss me around."

The incident appeared calculated to elicit a response that enabled Phillip to do what he wanted---tally points, a status job. One student was chosen to record the points awarded to each table throughout the day. The table with the highest points for the week received a prize. One of Barbara's responses noted that Stephen had asked to tally points three times, the probable topic of the exchange between the two boys. On other occasions when Phillip was angry, including one the researcher observed, it often took him a long time to regain composure or his "mask." In this incident, he was immediately sunny and upbeat as soon as he got up to tally points. Neither pupil seemed to take it as seriously as Barbara or the researcher did at the time.

Barbara took her cue from her cooperating teacher, noting that humor and positive reinforcement worked, and interacted with him in a similar way. She noted that, "he just loves that positive reinforcement," and she accommodated by delivering the most praise in both lessons to Phillip. She observed, "He gets hostile and aggressive if you "take him down" in the classroom instead of praising him," something she was very careful not to do. Barbara's comments, while indicating some uneasiness about Phillip's unpredictable behavior, were generally positive.

There was also evidence of Phillip's enthusiasm and interest in learning. During the first lesson, Barbara noted Phillip listening intently to the stories being read. That lesson involved 18 of his 20 call-outs. Most were personal responses to the stories. His enthusiastic call-outs also garnered Phillip eight reprimands, the highest number for an individual student in that lesson. Phillip became most excited when one story was read in Black dialect. In lesson two, Phillip also became enthusiastic after the writing assignment was announced, responding, "I know who I meet!" In fact, his enthusiastic comments were one reason his team did not get some points, which made him angry. A general kindheartedness was also evident when Phillip let his guard down and helped others or shared his feelings and writing. At one point, when Stephen had his head down appearing to cry, Phillip leaned across the table to check on him. Peers seemed to like Phillip, and did not label him a troublemaker, despite his outbursts.

Barbara's interactions with Phillip seemed to stem from two motivations: (1) to control his outbursts so the lesson would not be disrupted and (2) from a genuine affection and enjoyment of interacting with him. Several of her approaches, and several of his to her, involved a sharing of writing, genuine conversation, and praise. Her other approaches involved determining and stopping incidents at his table that might progress to aggression. Phillip's other approaches to Barbara involved suggestions to help the class write, or requests for spelling help.

While Barbara liked Phillip, she also seemed intimidated and anxious about his reactions. But she kept her frustration with him in check. Barbara interacted with Phillip in the same manner she observed Mrs. Smith using---controlling through positive praise and redirection. This pattern of interaction reduced Phillip's outbursts. Barbara's interactions with Phillip were quite different from those with Brett, and appeared more positive and deferential in the public forum of the classroom.

William

William was a White male with sandy brown hair and a slight build. He was identified as a gifted student, and a member of Brett's cohort of troublemakers. William's few peer interactions were negative. During the first lesson he spent his time on the floor calling out answers (5 times) and annoying those around him, particularly Black males near him.

In the second lesson, conducted with students seated at tables, no peer interaction occurred between William and other students during the 90 minutes of lesson, seatwork, and dismissal. The volunteered opinion of a tablemate who identified William as a member of Brett's group, also identified a possible reason for this: "One person I don't like at my table is William, because he's the one that makes us lose points." In fact, the only verbal interaction seen in the second taping was an incident at the pencil sharpener when William saw the camera and warned Brett he was being taped.

Barbara's interactions with William were mostly negative. During the first lesson neither Barbara nor William approached one another. He received praise once at the beginning of the lesson for unpacking quickly after arriving late. During the story lesson William called out answers five times. Barbara ignored his first two call outs. His third call-out was accepted and used to continue Barbara's explanation of what they would be doing in the lesson. However, his fourth call-out earned him a reprimand for an outburst. His last call-out was only tangentially related and Barbara responded, "Ok, William, we don't need to talk about that now."

Teacher interaction in the second lesson was fairly negative as well. As with Brett, there were few times when Barbara approached William, or he approached her. The first of the three times William approached Barbara involved an incident where William requested permission to go to the coat room early to get his bookbag. Barbara said no. The other two times were requests for information or items. Barbara's approaches to William, were extensions of her general monitoring visits at his table, and usually involved a directive to work harder, do more, or clean-up.

Barbara's comments revealed a general irritation with William:

> "William just wants to show off, always does. He's the biggest brow pleaser you've ever seen...William tends to want the attention, and will like talk about anything,..."

They also revealed her belief that William's behavior was motivated by an ulterior and manipulative purpose, i.e., to curry favor or gain attention. While she thought his comments were often problematic, Barbara still called on William with regularity. Overall, while William was called on no more often when his hand was up, Barbara called on him more than any of the other pupils who were analyzed when his hand was not up. In several instances Barbara turned to William for the answer she was looking for to continue a discussion in the way that she wanted. William often provided the answer. But occasionally he did not. In one incident William angered her by attempting to elaborate a comment made earlier by Brett, and dismissed by Barbara, rather than provide the desired answer to a low-level question he knew.

Barbara's tendency to call on William often, despite her irritation at some of his answers, seemed motivated by her desire to continue lesson momentum by using the gifted students, especially William, to provide "right" answers. William's occasional attempts to sabotage this process could stem from his perception of this fact, coupled with possible resentment of the negative patterns evident in Barbara's interactions with him. Such occasions could also have earned him status with his friend, Brett, who openly challenged Barbara.

Although Barbara admitted to being irritated with William's behavior, she also perceived that he was very bored with school, and was unsure of how to resolve that problem, "I have yet to find a way to interest him on anything... William, no matter what you do he's bored." William's physical demeanor in the classroom might also have contributed to Barbara's feelings and interpretations. Captured on videotape, William was characteristically sprawled in slouches, head in hand, disinterested and uninvolved. Barbara's feelings about William seemed to stem from this demeanor and his problematic interactions.

Barbara and William seemed locked in a pattern of mutual manipulation. She seemed to use William to facilitate lesson movement through correct answers and William used this as an opportunity to gain attention and occasionally status by sabotaging the process. While they may not have been aware of this cycle, they both appeared to express their resentment of manipulation. Barbara expressed hers in comments in her interview and journal, while William expressed his through his actions and body language.

Stephen

Stephen was a tall, chubby African-American boy with large eyes and an often frowning face. He was an only child from a middle class home. Of the students analyzed, Stephen earned the most negative responses from Barbara. Her choice of words in describing Stephen reveal her opinion:

> "He's a spoiled baby. ...He does it all the time, he'll lose a paper and sulk about it for half an hour, he's just spoiled, plain spoiled. ...He's back again. He just whines constantly"

Barbara's comments also suggested his motivation for the crying, pouting, and whining was manipulation to get his way. These comments by Stephen about one pouting/crying incident confirmed her belief:

> Researcher: "Why did you put your head down?" (no response)
> Stephen: "Harold had to wake me up and everything."
> Researcher: "You weren't asleep, though, were you?"
> Stephen: "No. But I told him I wasn't crying."
> Researcher: "So why did you have your head down?"
> Stephen (with emotion): "Because everybody else got a chance."
> Researcher: "Well, it got her attention. Your hand up for a long time didn't get her attention, but that did. Is that part of the reason?" (Stephen nods yes furiously)

Stephen's attempt to cover up his "crying," might indicate that he was aware his behavior was creating problems for him with peers. Volunteered peer comments confirm that Stephen often acted like a baby, crying easily for no real reason.

Stephen's behavior in the two lessons was quite different. Although all the pupils had fewer interactions in the first lesson than in the second, Stephen only raised his hand once during the first lesson. He was called on only once when his hand was not up. He had no reprimands and there were no teacher or pupil comments about Stephen. No peer interactions were noted for him. He appeared to simply listen and take in the stories that were being told. When asked what his favorite part of the unit was he confidently said, "The Anansi stories" (lesson one). However, he did not like the task involved in the second lesson, "I like writing, but I didn't like writing this story."

What was common between the two lessons was Stephen's numerous approaches to Barbara. In the

first lesson, these occurred during the morning check-in time and concerned the correctness of a paper. In the second lesson, a similar pattern occurred in the writing segment of the lesson. This comment illustrates that pattern, as well as Barbara's exasperation, "Not again! How many times did I talk to Stephen? Like 5 times? ...(laughing) ...Could we keep a tally?" The underlying motivation for the constant approaches during the writing portion of the lesson was evident in both the transcript of the lesson, and the interview---Stephen didn't want to continue working on the assignment:

> Researcher: "You didn't look too happy with that answer."
> Stephen: "Nope!"
> Research: "Why?"
> Stephen (shrugging shoulders): "I was finished."
> Researcher: "You didn't want to write anymore?"
> Stephen: "No!"

Stephen's motivation for the last few approaches was revealed in this comment by Barbara, "he'd asked me three times about points." Stephen's approaches to Barbara appeared to be a strategy to wear her down and get his way (i.e., get the correct answer, get out of writing anymore, or to get to tally points), a behavior she recognized and labeled as "spoiled."

Finally, Stephen appeared to have an extrinsic locus of control, blaming others for "making him do things" rather than realizing his own responsibility for his actions:

> Stephen: "Phillip keeps on bothering me."
> Researcher: "How was he bothering you?"
> Stephen: "He writes and sings, and makes me say, 'You better be quiet.'"

Stephen's problematic social behavior earned him the most negative evaluations from Barbara. Her feelings were also reflected in the fact that she did not approach Stephen except when he was creating a problem, usually at his table with Phillip. Of the five approaches in the second lesson, two were when Stephen was distracting others by whining and complaining, one was when he had Phillip off-task giggling by using baby talk, one was when Stephen and Phillip were fussing at each other, and the final one was when Stephen did not move from his spot on the carpet back to his seat, despite her directives to do so. Barbara's dislike was also evident in that she praised Stephen the least (none in lesson two and once in lesson one).

While Stephen was not violent or aggressive, his whining, crying, and staged scenes were just as problematic for Barbara in maintaining order and movement through a lesson. However, to give Stephen the attention he wanted to prevent such a scene, could be considered a reward which would encourage its continuation. Her comments suggest her ambivalence and frustration negotiating a balance of attention to Stephen, especially since his behavior affected Phillip:

> Barbara: "He's back again. You have to coddle him constantly and it drives me nuts."
> Researcher: "Do you have to?"
> Barbara: "You don't have to, but do you want him sobbing for an hour in your classroom?"

Although Barbara disliked Stephen, and would avoid him if possible, his constant approaches made that impossible. Barbara recognized that giving Stephen all the attention he wanted, or giving into his whining, would have only rewarded or encouraged the continuation of that behavior, but she also knew that ignoring his behavior risked creating disruption in her class. Barbara's anger and resentment at finding herself in this manipulative dilemma were evident in her comments. Barbara's interactions with Stephen could be characterized by a yo-yo. She ignored his behavior or interacted negatively in reprimands and directives until

she sensed his emotional frustration, and then she would give in to avoid a scene.

Cross-Case Patterns of Interaction

Complicating Group Interaction

Some circumstantial data patterns across the cases suggested possible tensions or conflicts might have existed between Brett's group and the Black male pupils in the class, which may have been complicating classroom management, and being influenced by it. However, Barbara did not seem to be cognizant of the overall pattern, or what it might imply, although she was aware of individual patterns.

The coat room appeared to have some significance in peer interactions. During the taping of the morning class, it was noted that Black males spent a great deal of time in the coat room together before class began. Upon entering the room, Brett avoided the coat room, a pattern Barbara noted without prompting:

> "Every morning Brett does this. He'll drape his book bag over the back of his chair, and then at some point someone inevitably trips over it or the chair falls backwards."

When directed to take his stuff to the coat room as per class routine, Brett moved slowly, causing Barbara to reprimand and direct him two more times to move, "Quickly, Brett!" As he neared the coat room, several Black male pupils emerged. They subsequently returned after he exited. The other members of this cohort also had habitual behavior patterns that may have been strategies to avoid the coat room. David was one of the first students to arrive in the class each day, thus avoiding interaction with other students in the coat room. William regularly arrived late when the coat room had emptied. Both boys were dropped off by parents, allowing greater freedom to regulate their arrival time.

During afternoon pack-up, students were sent by table groups to get bookbags and pack-up. An overlap of students from different groups built up in the coat room. Many of the Black males retrieved their bookbags quickly and brought them out to the common rug area to pack them there.

A pattern that emerged for William during the afternoon lesson was a repeated one, again involving the coat room, at times other than official entering and packing for the day. Minutes before groups were to be called, William started for the coat room. Barbara noticed and reprimanded him, "William, have a seat. I have not dismissed you or your table." However when his group was called, William did not go. When Barbara saw him on the videotape sitting at the table alone she remarked:

> "He does that every afternoon. All the kids know it. His chair is never on his desk. He's got stuff spread out ...Well, his bookbag is never packed."

It was customary for William to not be packed up and ready to leave on time. He, consequently, was rarely in the coat room with the other students as they packed up. He would do so after everyone else had left. When questioned about this pattern, it did not suggest anything to Barbara other than her interpretation of his character as absent-minded and lackadaisical.

Finally, incidents were observed during the lesson that was videotaped in the morning, where both Brett and William were active in bothering Black male pupils by invading their personal space, hitting or kicking. The incidents were obvious. Barbara called on the students to stop the behavior, but her desists were weak. She did not notice the pattern of White males from this group harassing Black males.

Brett appeared to be the more methodical of the two, targeting Phillip, a Black male, and progressively moving closer and closer to him in a series of five moves on the carpet, then lunging forward in a movement that brought him in contact. At no point on the videotape did Phillip interact, speak or provoke Brett in any way. When asked about the incident on the tape, Phillip did not respond by saying there was an accident, or that someone had bumped into him. His response was guarded, but negative:

Researcher:"Who was the teacher referring to? What happened?"
Phillip: "They were hitting me on the head!"
Researcher: "Who?"
Phillip: "Brett."
Researcher: "Why was he doing that?" (No response from Phillip, but his face is angry and sullen)

As noted, Phillip refused to comment on Brett's motivation. The following incident and comments were recorded on William's harassment:

William is waving his hands near his neighbor, slapping legs, and invading the personal space of Dennis (a Black male) next to him; Ahmad is throwing pretend punches.)
Barbara: "William, do you have any suggestions?"
William: "No."
Barbara: "We'll come back to you then. You think about it, cause it looks like you're bothering Dennis"

Researcher: "What was going on there on the floor?"
Ahmad: "I don't know....That was William, he was kicking me and Dennis."
Researcher: "It looks like you were talking there. Who were you talking to?"
Ahmad: "I was telling William not to bother me."

William did not harass White students near him in either lesson. Other incidents were reported by Barbara in her journal:

"Phillip (a Black male) and Harold (a white male) almost had a brawl today on the playground. Both are very excitable/volatile anyway, and I think that Harold accidentally bumped Phillip during basketball at recess. Harold was being fairly inoffensive, too, so a big fight was avoided."

"One boy shoved and yelled at the other because his chair was too close. Not a big deal to most, but both kids lost control at that point. It makes me very nervous because the whole class can be unpredictable in this way."

Given the harassment observed in the lessons, it would be informative to know the names of the two boys in the latter example. Such a reaction might have been both predictable and understandable.

The combination of recorded incidents of harassment and fighting, as well as the avoidance of unsupervised group interaction in the back coat room, suggested the possibility of group conflict involving race, which Barbara did not seem to consider. Her lack of experience with diverse cultures may have prevented her from realizing that racial strife is possible even between third graders.

Comparisons of Barbara's Interaction Across Cases

While there were differences in the interactions that occurred between Barbara and the pupils in the minicases, few obvious patterns appeared consistently by ethnicity. The only one that held consistently was that African-American pupils left their seats to approach the teacher much more often than White pupils. The two African-American males approached Barbara four to six times more often than the White males. Stephen and Phillip also received a similar number of five teacher approaches and exchanges. The other students, Brett and William, had much lower numbers. But while t he nature and tone of those interactions were distinctly different between the two boys, Barbara's purpose for approaching was to control their "volatile" behavior. Her exchanges with Phillip were often characterized by positive interaction such as conversation, sharing, and praise. Phillip's

approaches were often to ask for information or provide suggestions to help the class. However, her interactions with Stephen were primarily neutral or negative. She tolerated his numerous approaches, but disliked the exchanges which consisted of whining and complaining designed to gain him some objective. Barbara also approached and interacted with Phillip and Stephen more often, especially at any sign of elevated activity at the table they shared to stop any behavior that might escalate into a "scene," as well as checking progress on work.

The number of times these pupils were called on when their hands were raised was not substantially different. However, there was a greater variety in the number of times that Barbara called on these pupils when their hands were not raised. Stephen was only called on once, Phillip was called on three times, Brett was called on four times, and William was called on six times. However, William and Brett, as gifted pupils, tended to provide more "correct" answers to teacher questions, thereby moving the lesson along. This may account for Barbara's tendency to call upon them more often.

A difference did appear on call-outs. Phillip called out 20 times during the two lessons, a much greater number than William's six, and Brett's four. Stephen had no call-outs at all. This pattern may have been indicative of SES/culture, rather than race. While both Phillip and Stephen were African Americans they had very different backgrounds. Phillip was a street-wise kid from a low SES home who spoke in Black dialect, while Stephen was an only child from a middle class home who spoke more standard English. Barbara tended to accept call-outs that were answers to her questions, or relevant to the content, but personal comments or reactions often received a reprimand. Phillip's call-outs tended to be of the latter type. Phillip's behavior during most call-outs, especially in the first lesson, did not seem aimed at disruption, but rather communicated his personal responses to the stories read in the lesson. They were indicative of a call-and-response pattern of communication, common in many African-American communities. Phillip showed enthusiasm and interest when calling out, and frustration when reprimanded for such call-outs. His African-American peers in this class did much less calling out and more hand raising. Barbara did not know how to handle Phillip's call-outs:

> "One student, Phillip, was driving me crazy. He's smart, but is the one who demands constant attention and reinforcement. He blurts out and interrupts other students. Once he is called on, he will go on and on forever, to the point of getting totally off the subject. I am unsure as to how I should deal with him."

Barbara's hesitation may have come from her interpretation of his reactions as "volatile" and aimed at gaining attention. It is possible that his frustration was quite heartfelt from a difference in communication norms between home and school, and his anger at being misinterpreted very real. It is interesting to note that Barbara's response to call-outs from Phillip was quite different from her response when William called out. She was much more apt to cut William off, and note the inappropriateness of an answer than she was with Phillip. Again, perhaps her perception that Phillip might *"get hostile and aggressive if you 'take him down' in the classroom,"* might be the rationale for the difference. It is also possible that she sensed the difference in motivations obvious in their different body language, but had no background to interpret it in terms of culture.

All the pupils received comparable numbers of directives (10 to 13) from the teacher. Reprimands, however, did show a difference. Brett and Phillip received 16 and 18 reprimands respectively. The number dropped to ten for William, and seven for Stephen. Again, there was no pattern by pupil ethnicity. The highest reprimands were for two males, a White and an African-American. However, they also received larger numbers of positive comments and praise from Barbara.

In further analysis, another difference was found. Barbara's reprimands and directives to the White males were often linked, consisting of a reprimand or desist for one behavior and a directive for another behavior. They were often delivered from across the room making them more public. They seemed designed to maintain on-task behavior and compliance. Her reprimands and directives to the African-American males were not linked, and were often made in close proximity with an approach. The tone of the reprimands and directives was also different for the two groups. A number of these linked reprimands/directives to the White pupils were more curt and implied that they should know better:

> "The people at the pencil sharpener (William, Brett, Sarah--all White) should have done that before we started. Have a seat."
>
> "William, get to work. Brett, same for you. This is really not funny, not at all, cause I know you can write better than that."

Many of the reprimands to the Black pupils were simple "Shhhh's." More elaborate reprimands and directives to the African-American males were delivered in close proximity with more privacy, and were also milder and more polite in tone than those for the White, male pupils analyzed: "Phillip, you're going to have to be quiet, ok?"; "You guys! You need to do your own work, darlin'." These milder reprimands and directives may have been designed to control without provoking "volatile" behavior. Perhaps the difference in interaction might stem from how she believed the pupils might react and how she believed that might impact the class and her lessons.

In her journal entry two weeks after school began, she noted the "volatile" nature of the students in her class, and her cooperating teacher's evaluation for what that meant for instruction:

> "Several of our students are very emotional and volatile. None of them are labeled as 'emotionally disturbed,' but Mrs. Smith sees their personalities as somewhat dangerous in the classroom.... It makes me very nervous because the whole class can be unpredictable in this way. They feed off of each others' emotions throughout the day."

From classroom observations and Barbara's journal entries, it was clear that a number of the students in her class did represent a definite challenge to maintaining order and completing lessons---an important concern to Barbara as a novice. As any teacher knows, an emotional scene or fight can indeed cripple instruction and discipline for the remainder of the day. While none of the students were labeled emotionally disturbed, several did have stressful home situations and met with the guidance counselor once a week, as well as any time during the day as needed. None of the students profiled, however, was included in this group. In order to determine if this might be the reason for the difference in interaction noted for Black and White males, a further analysis was done on the interactions between Barbara and two additional students: (1) Harold, a White, male pupil she noted as "emotional" and "volatile," who met with the counselor regularly, and (2) Ahmad, an African-American male whom Barbara noted as "a sweet child."

Barbara approached Harold six times and had five exchanges with Harold, similar to the number with the African-American males. However, Harold only approached Barbara once. Only Phillip received more praise than Harold, who had five praises. Her directives to Harold were not linked with reprimands, and were polite and personable, as well as delivered in close proximity. An analysis of Barbara's interaction with Ahmad, a "sweet" African-American male with good behavior also helped determine that the pattern observed was not directly based on race or ethnicity. Ahmad had just two directives and four reprimands, but two of those were linked. He approached Barbara five times, and she approached him three times, two of which were solicited by a raised hand. This pattern is similar to that observed for the two White males from the initial group analyzed.

It appeared that Barbara's interactional style for reprimands and directives, as well as approaches and exchanges, was determined by her perceptions of how likely the pupil was to escalate peer or teacher interaction to a "volatile" or "emotional" level. Barbara seemed equally concerned over Stephen's crying and making a scene, as she was over Harold's or Phillip's behavior becoming violent or aggressive. There was evidence that she personalized interaction depending on what was perceived to placate these volatile students: praise and opportunities to help for Phillip, and personalization of interaction for Harold. If she perceived no such threat with a student, as in the case of Brett, William, or Ahmad, Barbara was more curt and to the point in her reprimands and directives.

A final question arises from the accuracy of Barbara's perceptions of these students' volatility. As the

minicases indicate, while Brett and William were not obvious or emotional, they were definitely disruptive. Their method of disruption was to aggravate other students who would produce an obvious scene or argument. Barbara's attempts to curtail and control the movement and talk of the three "troublemakers" illustrated her awareness of this need, but her comments and explanation of their behavior did not reflect the same level of concern as for the "volatile" pupils.

Of the pupils analyzed whom Barbara characterized as "emotional" or "volatile," Harold appears to be the only one who might actually be expected to lose control in a truly irrational manner. While Phillip or Stephen might create an incident or scene through crying or yelling, they appeared to be very much in control, often using these behaviors to gain the attention or response they wanted. Since their responses appeared to be learned responses, they would be amenable to modification. While Stephen's behavior seemed to be one resulting from individual circumstances, Phillip's may have been cultural and in contrast to the norms of the classroom. His loudness, posturing, call-outs, and what Barbara called aggressive physical touch, are often acceptable cultural behavior for many African Americans. Unfamiliar with these norms, Barbara interpreted Phillip's behavior as irrational volatility and aggression, rather than quite normal frustration and anger at being misunderstood and punished for "normal" behavior. His aggression and saving face were, no doubt, effective strategies in Phillip's experience, ones he adapted to manipulating his teachers.

One of the characteristics Barbara mentioned, excessive affection and touch, were mentioned at other times and with other Black pupils, even "sweet" Ahmad:"...it almost bothers me that they want to hug me and hang on me and confide in me constantly." It is unclear who initiated physical contact, but the videotapes show Barbara as very physical and affectionate with the students, patting backs, putting arms around shoulders, and stroking or ruffling hair, even with Stephen. Her affectionate touch may have been interpreted as an acceptance of such a level of touch. While the pupils "excessive" touch seemed to make Barbara uncomfortable because it transgressed the level acceptable by her norms, she did not pull away from the children when they were demonstrative. Her discomfort was only revealed in her journal. Her affection and regard for the children kept her from doing what she knew would hurt their feelings. But she did not understand it and attributed it to a neediness for affection due to a lack of love and attention at home.

Barbara's interactions with pupils appeared to be different depending on her perception of their probable emotional or volatile response. Her perceptions of such "volatility" seemed to be affected by cultural interpretations. Phillip is perceived to be "volatile" because of a communication and interaction pattern that is not unusual in African-American culture. Brett and William, however, are not deemed "volatile," even though they are extremely disruptive, because of their mainstream, Anglo communication and interaction patterns. These perceptions seemed to lead to differential interactions and treatments of the boys in the class, which may have precipitated more disruption because of feelings of unfairness.

Although these differences were not exclusive to race or ethnicity, they were affected by it. It is important to note that Phillip (a Black male) and Brett (a White male), who illustrated this difference in teacher interaction most clearly, were two of the prominent social leaders in this class. Their social adeptness and leadership abilities might be one of the reasons for Barbara's positive regard for both. These two males also received the most reprimands from Barbara. Brett's and Phillip's social expertise in their own cultures may have added to Barbara's incorrect perceptions that the boy from another culture was "volatile," while the boy from her own culture was not, when in reality both were equally capable of disrupting the classroom, as her reprimand rates for both demonstrate.

Implications

This study attempted to discover information about the cognitive processes of White, female preservice teachers in interaction with pupils from diverse cultures, particularly trait attribution. The literature from social and cultural cognition suggests that individuals will interpret others' behaviors through the lens of their own cultural norms, making inferences about the characteristics and motivation of others. Such inferences may be incorrect if the other person is from a different cultural background. The standards for judging such behaviors

are derived from shared cultural models containing expectations and norms which are learned at an early age and only known implicitly (D'Andrade, 1990a; Quinn & Holland, 1987). Since these norms are implicit, and often unexamined, alternative interpretations of behaviors are rarely considered (Argyle, 1982; D'Andrade, 1990b; Quinn & Holland, 1987).

The evidence from an analysis of Barbara's interaction supported the hypothesis that culture was a factor in the interpretation of pupil behavior in classroom management and interaction. However, the role of culture in such interpretations appeared to be far more complex than anticipated, and involved many more factors in the real environment of the classroom than appeared in controlled experiments. Phillip, the pupil who was the most distinctly different in culture, appeared to be the most misinterpreted.

Misinterpretations of behavior due to culture, appeared to occur in many areas, but were most prevalent, and the patterns most consistent, in management interactions during lessons, such as calling on pupils, directives, reprimands, and approaches. It is known that such situations demand quick, interactive teaching decisions (Carter, Cushing, Sabers, Stein, & Berliner, 1988; Clark & Peterson, 1986). The inferences about pupil behavior on which they are based would encourage the increased use of attributions based on implicit cultural norms and, therefore, increase the likelihood of misattribution. Far less misattribution seemed to occur in this study in one-on-one interactions.

Tacit norms used to decide whether a call-out was acceptable, or what constituted rudeness or disruption, appeared to be an area that needed exploration. The fact that such cultural knowledge appeared to exist and to be used in making interactive decisions makes it important. Barbara's uncertainty in these situations indicated that using that information for decision-making was ambiguous and caused some anxiety. This suggests that course work or practica focusing on classroom management must find a way to transcend the explicit and obvious to make preservice teachers bring the implicit to consciousness for reflection and mediation, for their own benefit as well as for the children they teach.

Most programmatic responses to multicultural and management needs in teacher education have been isolated seminar/lecture courses or increased field time. Teachers have complained, and studies have confirmed, that course work is ineffectual (Barry & Lechner, 1995; Garcia & Pugh, 1992; Larke, 1990). The variables of classroom practice, combined with the individual and group variables of 20 to 30 people in exponential interactions, are simply too complex for memorized information and theories. The literature reviewed, and the findings of this study, suggest that experience alone may not be effective either. It would be more productive to guide and scaffold preservice teachers in learning to use their natural inferencing abilities more effectively in informed and supervised interactive classroom practice. However, information must be an important component.

The preservice teachers in this study were unaware of many cultural norms. Many well-meaning advocates of multiculturalism have refused to talk about cultural norms under the assumption that it would create incorrect expectations based on stereotypes and, thus, misinterpretations of behavior. Research in cross-cultural psychology (Bochner, 1982) has found information on such norms essential in training individuals for positive interactions in other cultures. The findings in this study suggest that incorrect expectations will occur despite withholding such knowledge. But knowledge alone is insufficient. Cognitive processes can only be changed through coached and mentored practice. If knowledge about inferencing processes and cultural norms were included in foundation courses, and relevant opportunities to practice their use and examine the results reflectively with knowledgeable mentors, preservice teachers might learn to control these processes more effectively and avoid creating negative situations for culturally diverse pupils, as occurred in the classroom lessons analyzed in this study.

Preservice teachers need relevant instruction, coaching, and practice on how to infer appropriately. They need to understand these processes and guard against their inappropriate use. Research on trait attribution and stereotyping indicate that these processes often occur unconsciously, but that when individuals are made aware of them, and any biases that are influencing them, they adjust those processes to make them more balanced (Wegener & Petty, 1995). It is important to note that Barbara, and the other participants in this

study, had unique inferential and interactional patterns reflecting their unique backgrounds. Any intervention to correct problems in such patterns would necessitate an individualized approach that included mentored guidance and reflection. Generic, quick fixes designed for use with preservice teachers in large groups would not correct the problems noted in this study.

A necessary prerequisite to realizing biases about members of diverse cultures is actual experience interacting with such individuals in situations that encourage non-judgmental examinations of feelings and preconceptions. But research on trait attribution and stereotyping, as well as the findings in this study, suggest that experience alone is insufficient. This is especially true if the experience lacks appropriate guidance and thoughtfulness as often happens in unsupervised early practica. Experiences must be structured to encourage a level of dissonance that encourages reflection, but does not produce severe distress. Making inferences and checking them reflectively should be an integral part of preservice teachers' experiential activities that are coached by knowledgeable instructors and supervisors who have sufficient time and commitment required for the scaffolded shaping of cognitive processes. Since these processes are the result of normal human cognition, and are often implicit, it is vital that teacher educators refrain from judgment or recriminations, but rather model and guide the need for reflection, monitoring, and correction. Any such harshness would most likely cause defensiveness, resistance, and a level of distress that would prevent thoughtful change. Practica assignments that focus preservice teachers' attention on their interactional behavior through such devices as audiotaping, videotaping, and reflective analysis may improve the accuracy of interactive responses.

That Barbara, and the other teaching associates in this study, were unaware of the differences in their interactions, or of alternative interpretations for pupil behavior, suggests that the assumption that teachers who exhibit differential treatment of pupils are purposefully racist or prejudicial may be incorrect. They may not have sufficient knowledge or experiences to accurately interpret pupil behavior when the pupils are from a diverse culture, including African American. To suggest to them, without evidence of their thinking, that such differences in interaction are intentional with the purpose of disadvantaging particular pupils is unfair. While prejudiced teachers exist, it is impossible to determine without careful analysis if differential treatment is caused by ignorance or prejudice. Teacher educators need to design appropriate interventions to address multicultural needs. However, they should be based upon knowledgeable research rather than beliefs, and be fair to all involved.

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